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## Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, IV

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their contribution to analytic debates, such as that regarding the origins of particular quilt designs or colors, is valuable in a field that is too often characterized by purely descriptive writing. Unfortunately, this book is weakened by annoying editorial mistakes such as erroneous page references to virtually all of the illustrations and to some index topics. The format of the book is also problematic, making a smooth reading difficult. The captions often unnecessarily repeat the main narrative, and though the long captions and informational inserts are interesting, their placement within the text is unduly obtrusive.

The collective value of these and other books based on quilt documentation projects is the new insights they provide into the influence of region, ethnicity, and time on national quilt aesthetics and traditions. Since the books are locally important and are appreciated for their beauty, their inspiring quilts, and their interesting biographical glimpses, each is properly directed to its respective state's general audience. However, because they are unique resources, these books should also be addressed to the researchers who would build upon their wealth of new information. Though all of the books reviewed here include helpful bibliographies and indexes, only the Nebraska book provides reference notes to the text throughout and includes the archival numbering of each quilt illustrated, features that will aid future research immensely. The Nebraska book sets a model worth emulating if the books are to support further progress in researching this important, vital category of American material culture.

*Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, IV*, edited by Thomas Carter and Bernard L. Herman. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991. 249 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$34.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY FRED W. PETERSON UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, MORRIS

*Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, IV* is a selection of papers from the 1989 and 1990 meetings of the Vernacular Architecture Forum. The forum is a professional organization formed more than ten years ago by folklorists, architectural historians, anthropologists, art historians, American studies scholars, geographers, and historic preservationists to share interests and involvement in discovering, documenting, and interpreting previously overlooked and neglected aspects of the architectural history of the nation. This collection of studies is the fourth of a series of edited publications representing some of the best scholarship on the architecture of ordinary persons and common places. It offers the reader work in what the editors

characterize as "*the new architectural history*"—analyses and interpretations of buildings as significant aspects of the material culture of particular times and places. Buildings are explained as part of a landscape that includes both "high style" architecture designed by professionals and vernacular structures planned and constructed by local builders. Houses, mansions, claim shanties, shops, stores, marketplaces, gas stations, and motels are studied as part of neighborhoods, villages, towns, cities, or rural communities. Field work and on-site documentation is the basis for understanding these kinds of buildings in the context of historic, social, ethnic, and aesthetic facts and values.

The nineteen studies in this volume are grouped according to relationships between buildings and builders, buildings and their regional environments, and buildings and popular culture. For instance, the diary of a New England carpenter of the first half of the nineteenth century acts as an instructive and detailed account of the circumstances in which such artisans worked and the effect they had on local taste and preferences in styles of building. Hispanic house styles in California or New Mexico, slave villages in the West Indies, and coal company towns of southeastern Pennsylvania are the historic materials that provide the basis to understand the nature of vernacular buildings in regional contexts. A history of beds and bedrooms from colonial to twentieth-century America and the image of the ideal house as prescribed in *The Ladies' Home Journal* furnish subjects for understanding buildings in relation to popular culture.

The relevance of these topics to the history of Iowa and to an understanding of its material culture may not be immediately evident. The lack of specific reference to the state or the region should not discourage Iowans from a complete and careful reading of *Perspectives*, however. The volume can serve as a primer in those perspectives of "the new architectural history," enabling the reader to discover one's local environment and perceive its form and patterns in a meaningful way. Should the reader already be conversant with these points of view, *Perspectives* offers models for further fieldwork and research in archives and libraries. Given the examples of scholarship here, the reader has a framework to study significant aspects of the Iowa landscape—the development of designs and functions of silos in Iowa, for example—and to assess the influence this architectural form had on agriculture in the state, or the relationship of traditional types of dwellings such as the I-House or the Georgian house to Iowa's early settlement patterns.

One can better perceive and understand values inherent in one's own immediate environment by learning the qualities of vernacular buildings in other regions of the United States. We can appreciate the

differences we discover in such comparisons and we can celebrate the similarities we share with others in the nation and in the world as we understand the ways we live and work and play in the ordinary circumstances of the homes, businesses, shops, schools, and other structures we have built for our use and for our sense of private and public identity.

*Testaments in Wood: Finnish Log Structures at Embarrass, Minnesota*, photographs by Wayne Gudmundson, text by Suzanne Winckler. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, in cooperation with Sisu Heritage, Inc., 1991. xi, 83 pp. Notes, bibliography. \$16.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY MATTI E. KAUPS, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, DULUTH

This slim volume contains forty-eight photographs and a preface by Wayne Gudmundson, introduction by Eric Paddock, text by Suzanne Winckler, a cartogram by an anonymous contributor, and comments on photographs by Michael H. Koop. It is a miscellany of photographs and observations about buildings, people, events, and institutions set mostly within the confines of an administrative unit, the township of Embarrass in northeastern Minnesota. The aim is to convey photographically the landscape legacy of a Finnish rural enclave, a segment of a larger ethnic island, where over twenty log buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places, and where the past is promoted, commercialized, and sold to tourists. The volume is devoid of theoretical discussion, though the reader is reminded about the significance of Embarrass being a historic site, how photographs aspire to comprehend the interaction between people and the environment, and how alleged "architectural landmarks" supposedly act as "reminders of our cultural identity" (8). What constitutes Finnish identity and "Finnish architectural style" is left to the discretion of the reader.

The essay by Winckler ranges from Finland to Minnesota and covers a myriad of topics, including social, economic, and religious institutions in an attempt to provide a historical background to the settlement. Excepting the discussion on saunas, hay barns, and the use of the *vara* or scribe, it provides but minimal information in an integrative sense about the buildings, especially regarding the process of change in time. One wonders, for example, what was the impact, if any, of the cooperative movement on log buildings the Finns raised on land?

Koop's comments on the photographs, much as Winckler's essay, are marred in places by singular interpretations, factual errors, and inferential leaps of substantial magnitude. Unheard of is the sup-

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